

Ted Landmark looks to divisify architecture

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Out of about 100,000 architects nationwide, only 1.5 percent of them are minorities. But Boston's black architects are working to change that statistic.

"Our goal is not just to interest a more diverse group of people in architecture, but to provide a path that enables them to be successful," said Ted Landmark, president of the Boston Architectural College.

It's not that there hasn't been a black presence in architecture. The nation's predominantly black colleges have long had architectural programs and many, like Tuskegee University's, have followed in the tradition of architect Booker T. Washington, providing excellent technical training to generations of black architects.

And the number of black architects in the United States has been steadily rising. There were 880 licensed black architects in 1991; that has doubled to nearly 1,658 today. The number of black women architects has more than quadrupled, from 44 in 1991 to 221 as of last year.



Photo by Herald Staff photo

This year, the American Institute of Architects appointed its first black president, Washington, D.C.-based architect Marshall Purnell. The AIA convention in Boston this past spring highlighted efforts in Boston and around the country to bring more minority architects into the profession.

And in England, Nigerian-born architect David Adjaye has broken through to become the first black architectural superstar with his designs for Idea Stores, a radical rethinking of libraries. Adjaye, who's completing the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, even has his own TV show in London.

There's a large contingent of minority architects in cities such as Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Now Boston is making a move to develop more minority architects.

As an urban school, the Boston Architectural College is in the forefront of the effort. Some 203 of its 1,119 enrolled students identify themselves as black, Hispanic or Asian.

The BAC runs a summer academy for high school students. The academy recruits summer interns from high schools in Greater Boston. Juniors and seniors are prepared for the rigors of undergraduate design education by participating in the five-week summer program. Students are presented with a curriculum consisting of an introduction to drawing, design, building technology, architecture, planning, landscape and interior design, along with visits to firms, building sites and museums, said Cedric Sinclair, the BAC's spokesman.

The Houseman Scholarships, which promote diversity, cover the costs of the summer academy.

Also, each year the BAC provides eight scholarships to youths to participate in the summer academy program. Four of these students are invited back the following summer to serve as Houseman Fellows. All eight students who received the initial scholarship are eligible to apply for a scholarship to attend one of the BAC's degree programs.

Norma Fevrier, 19, of Medford took part in the BAC summer academy as both a student and Houseman Fellow and is now enrolled as a degree student at the BAC.

"Going to the summer academy made me want to study interior design and focus on space planning," said Fevrier, who is in her second year of study. "It was really hands-on; they teach you, and you go do it and learn from the critique."

But Landmark said reaching students in their later high school years is not early enough. So the BAC is linking its outreach programs to those offered at Citizens Schools Boston's eight middle schools, including at the Gavin Middle School and McCormack Middle Schools in Dorchester and the Irving Middle School in Roslindale.

The Citizens program introduces students from ages 10 to 12 to the architecture profession and over 100 students are in the